

Testimony in Support of LD 2144:**"Resolve, to Establish the Working Group to Prioritize Wellness and Mental Health Resources for Heritage Industries."**

Testimony of Jennifer Thompson, Executive Director, NAMI Maine

In Support of LD 2144 – Resolve, to Establish the Working Group to Prioritize Wellness and Mental Health Resources for Heritage Industries |Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services.

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services.

My name is Jennifer Thompson, and I serve as Executive Director of NAMI Maine — the state's largest grassroots mental health organization dedicated to improving the lives of individuals and families affected by mental illness. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in strong support of LD 2144.

Maine is facing a growing mental health crisis. More than 268,000 adults in our state live with a mental health condition. Each year, over 51,000 Mainers experience serious thoughts of suicide. In 2022 alone, we lost 268 community members to suicide. Compounding this crisis is the fact that more than 260,000 people in Maine live in areas with insufficient access to mental health professionals.

These figures are stark. But for Maine's heritage industries — fishing, forestry, and farming — the risk is even greater. Workers in these sectors face unique and compounding stressors: physically demanding work, economic instability, long hours, geographic isolation, and time spent away from loved ones. A deeply rooted culture of self-reliance often discourages open conversations about mental health, leading many to suffer in silence.

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At NAMI Maine, we work directly with individuals and families in these industries. What we consistently hear is that people want help — but it needs to be practical, respectful, and rooted in the realities of their lives. They don't want solutions imposed on them. They want to be partners in shaping those solutions. LD 2144 creates the structure for that partnership.

By establishing a working group that brings together heritage industry leaders, health professionals, state agencies, and community voices, this resolve provides a pathway to identify service gaps, improve coordination, and develop actionable, place-based recommendations. This is not about creating another report to sit on a shelf — it's about building a system that works better for the people who keep Maine running.

- Mental health is workforce health.
- Mental health is family health.
- Mental health is economic health.

When we invest in the mental well-being of Maine's heritage workers, we are protecting the very foundation of our communities and our economy.

NAMI Maine urges this Committee to support LD 2144 and advance this resolve. In doing so, you affirm that Maine's heritage workers are not invisible within our mental health system — they are essential to it.

Thank you for your time, your leadership, and your commitment to the people of Maine.

¹ NAMI Maine. NAMI Maine Data_25. Internal data report, 2025.

Mental Health in **Maine**

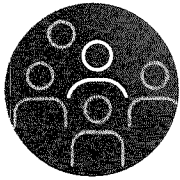


Many Mainers struggle with their mental health.

It is more important than ever to build a stronger mental health system that provides the care, support, and services needed to help people build better lives.

268,000

adults in Maine have a mental health condition. That's more than the population of **Augusta**.



1 in 5

 adults experience a **mental illness** each year.

More than **1 in 20 U.S. adults** experience a **serious mental illness** each year.

61,000

 Maine adults have a **serious mental illness**.

1 in 7 of the more than **4,000 people** in Maine **who are unhoused** have a **serious mental illness**.



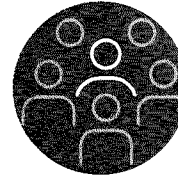
1 in 20

 adults have **serious thoughts of suicide** each year.

51,000 Maine adults have **serious thoughts of suicide** each year.

268

lives were **lost to suicide** in Maine in 2022.



1 in 6

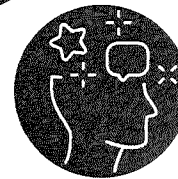
 U.S. adolescents aged 12-17 experience a **major depressive episode** each year.

18,000 Maine adolescents experience a **major depressive episode** each year.

1 in 9

 adolescents aged 12-17 have **serious thoughts of suicide** each year.

12,000 Maine adolescents have **serious thoughts of suicide** each year.



20%

of youth aged 0-17 in Maine have **experienced 2+ adverse childhood experiences**, which are linked to mental illness and substance misuse in adulthood.

Mental Health in **Maine**



More than
260,000 people in Maine live in
a community without enough
mental health professionals.

The need to address access to mental health care in Maine is urgent.

10x

more likely for a Mainer to be **forced out-of-network** for mental health care than for primary care.

9,580

calls were made to Maine's **988 Suicide & Crisis Line** call centers in 2023.

1 in 1,706

ratio for school psychologists to students in Maine's K-12 public schools. This is **worse** than the recommended ratio of one school psychologist for every 500 students.

MAINE
is facing a mental
health crisis.

73,000

adults in Maine reported needing mental health treatment but not receiving it between 2018-2019. **Cost is a prevailing factor** in not receiving treatment.

Mainers deserve to get the mental health care they need, when they need it.



NAMI Maine is part of NAMI, National Alliance on Mental Illness, the nation's largest grassroots mental health organization dedicated to building better lives for the millions of Americans affected by mental illness. Learn more at namimaine.org. For data citations, visit nami.quorum.us/mhpolicystats/.

This fact sheet was compiled based on data available in March 2025.

Addressing Mental Health is a Critical Issue in Maine

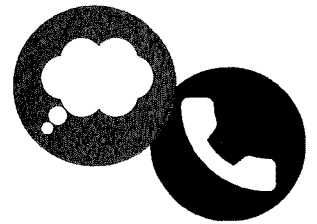
- More than **1 in 5** U.S. adults experience mental illness each year.
- More than **1 in 20** U.S. adults experience serious mental illness each year.
- More than **1 in 7** U.S. youth ages 6-17 experience a mental health disorder each year.

268,000

adults in Maine have a mental health condition. That's more than the population of **MAINE**.

Too many people in Maine are facing a suicide or mental health crisis.

- **59,000** adults in Maine reported having serious thoughts of suicide in the past year.
- Maine lost **274 people** to suicide in 2023.
- Mainers placed **2,590** calls to the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline in October 2025.



Accessing mental health care in Maine is a challenge.

- Only **52.1%** of U.S. adults with mental illness received treatment in 2024.
- In Maine, **268,713 people** live in mental health care professional shortage areas.



Without congressional action, many Mainers could lose health insurance.

- In Maine, **53,808 people** on the Marketplace received enhanced advance premium tax credits (eAPTCs) to help afford health insurance. That's **86%** of all enrollees in the state.
- About **1 in 6 people** on the Marketplace have a mental health diagnosis.

Without an extension of the eAPTCs, Mainers are expected to become uninsured. This is in addition to the **125,000** Mainers expected to lose Medicaid due to upcoming changes.

NAMI urges Congress to protect and support people with mental illness.

This fact sheet was compiled based on data available in November 2025. For data citations, visit nami.quorum.us/citations/